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**PRESS RELEASE
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Alaska National Guard

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By Sgt. Edward Eagerton

Going the distance, Alaska Air Guardsman runs marathon of marathons

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska— At a distance of 26.2 miles, running a marathon is no small feat. Likewise, having the opportunity to visit each of the 50 states is a goal that not all people have a chance to accomplish in their lifetime.

For one Alaska Air National Guardsman, the goal was to run a marathon in each of the 50 states.

Capt. Shane Garling, the 176th Wing deployment officer assigned to the 176th Logistics Readiness Squadron ran his first marathon, the Humpy's Classic Marathon in Anchorage, in August, 2000. To train for that event, he ran a half marathon every day for eight months prior, he said.

"It was a small local race, and so I decided to go down and run the race," said Garling while sitting at a desk in his office with a reminiscent smile on his tanned face. On the wall next to his desk, a map of the U.S. hangs with little tabs over each state, marking the name of the race, the location, date, and his finish times.

Although he was disappointed with his time of 3 hours and 18 minutes, Garling was inspired to run faster to eventually qualify for the Boston Marathon, which requires that a runner meets qualifying time standards within their age and gender groups in a marathon certified by a governing body affiliated with the International Association of Athletics Federation.

"My qualification for Boston was 3:10, so I missed it by eight minutes," explained Garling. "Hence, it drove me to want to run faster and take all the things I learned the first time and run another marathon."

In May, 2001, Garling ran his second in the National Guard Marathon held in Lincoln, Nebraska with the Guard's marathon team. There, he ran a 3:08 and qualified for the Boston Marathon.

By the time he ran the Boston Marathon in 2002, he already had a couple of marathons under his belt, and thought he "might as well run one in all 50 states," he said.

In 2002, Garling began running at least five out-of-state marathons every year. As his love of running continued to grow, so did his appreciation for the running community he was a part of.

"I'm always fascinated by people who have an interest in running," said Garling. "That is one of the things that I think running has become. It's more of a social event. It's more of

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talking to people, getting to why they're running or what marathon they're on or just the social interaction of it. I appreciate that side of running, and that's what I look forward to."

The social element of his running community would eventually lead him to meet his future wife, Julie, who lives in New York City, at the Medford Marathon in Wisconsin. Like Garling, she too shared a similar penchant for running marathons and a desire to complete one in each of the 50 states.

"Four years ago, in 2010, that was when I met my wife," said Garling. "For us to stay together and meet up every month, we decided to go do one marathon a month for the year. That's how we get together every month. For me, running is about relationships, because my wife and I get together and go to all of these great places to run these races."

With his wife maintaining her residence in New York City, Garling's marathon dates across the country increased. In 2012, he ran 15 marathons, all while also being deployed overseas for five months.

"While I was deployed, Julie completed many, many states and was sitting at 48, and she waited for me to catch up," Garling said.

In 2013, Garling ran another 18 marathons, including the Louisiana Marathon in Baton Rouge. Garling proposed to his future-bride at the finish line of that race.

On Jan. 19, 2014, the couple completed the last state on their list.

"I wanted to save Hawaii for number 50 because it was the 50th state," explained Garling. "That wasn't the only reason, though. We also got married there during the race."

Dressed in custom-made running clothes designed to look like a bride's dress complete with a sun-visor veil and a tuxedo running shirt for the groom, the couple stopped during the race and exchanged wedding vows. Joining them were bridesmaids and the best man, also wearing custom-made running costumes.

"At mile 17, we stopped and had a 30-minute ceremony and got married during the marathon," said Garling, "and then we continued on as a married couple."

For them, completing the 50 states was as much of an accomplishment as it was to get married.

"It's funny because our highlight of the day was us finishing the 50 states," Garling explained. "Our wedding was a big part of it, but finishing the states was a big deal."

Though Garling says he is not as competitive as he used to be, running continues to be a big part of his life, especially with it being part of his unique experience with his wife. Since his first marathon in 2000, Garling has run 89 marathons, and his wife has completed 111.

"My life is about running," said Garling, "and it's primarily because my wife lives on the other side of the country. So this is our get together every month, and also we get to go on little vacations. We get to see all parts of the world and parts of the country. We love it."

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Photo cutlines follow

Photo cutlines

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Capt. Shane Garling, the wing deployment officer of the 176th Logistics Readiness Squadron, Alaska Air National Guard, runs in the Lincoln Marathon in Lincoln, Neb., May 3, 2009. To his left is Alaska Air National Guardsman 2nd Lt. Kristi Laughlin-Hall, whom Garling was pacing to qualify for the National Guard's elite running team. U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Vernon Moore

CPT Garling 001/002

Capt. Shane Garling, the wing deployment officer of the 176th Logistics Readiness Squadron, Alaska Air National Guard, runs with his wife, Julie, in the Maui Oceanfront Marathon in Lahaina, Hawaii, Jan. 19. The couple completed their goal of running a marathon in each of the 50 U.S. states there. During the race, they were also married at the 17-mile mark during a 30-minute ceremony before completing the final 9.2 miles as husband and wife. Photos courtesy of Capt. Shane Garling